

Random Encounters

The Crawling Jungle

By James Jacobs



Azuvidexus, the Ravenous Maw

The heart and soul of the Crawling Jungle is Azuvidexus, a paragon half-fiend tyrannosaurus of immense power. Granted epic strength and power by the N'gharl Seed, Azuvidexus' goals and desires are all but inscrutable. In many ways, he seems to exist only to spread havoc and eat. To fully understand Azuvidexus, one must first know the history of this terrible being. This history is ancient and secret, and it should take many hours of research for a sage or a PC to piece it together. You'll find this history detailed in Part 1.



Today, Azuvidexus is driven by the overwhelming power of the N'gharl Seed to spread the Crawling Jungle across the world. The seed wants nothing more than to reform and rebuild itself into the mighty jungle realm that once existed on the Abyss, and if it can find the proper place in the Prime Material Plane to gestate, it can take root and overwhelm the world. As of yet, it hasn't found such a place -- if it even exists. But the seed is relentless, and it drives Azuvidexus to wander the world, constantly in search of a place to take hold.

Azuvidexus isn't much larger than a standard tyrannosaurus in size, but he is incredibly more terrifying to behold. Everything about his appearance seems enhanced to bring out the capacity to inflict death; his teeth are huge, razor-sharp tusks, his claws gigantic and muscular and tipped with serrated talons, his head horned, and his maw seething with red fire. He even bears a set of impressive batlike wings. But easily the most disturbing are his eyes, for in those burning orbs of fiery orange pulses a terrible intelligence; Azuvidexus is a cunning and dangerous foe who understands fully that there is little in the world that can oppose his might. Although he has been defeated several times before, he retains the memories of his past lives. In particular, he holds dear the memories of how he was slain before and knows better than to fall victim to the same situation twice. Each time he is slain, he learns from his mistakes and becomes all the more difficult to destroy when next he rises from the Crawling Jungle.

Azuvidexus: Male paragon half-fiend tyrannosaurus; CR 25; Huge outsider; HD 18d10+234; hp 630; Init +14; Spd 120 ft., fly 120 ft. (average); AC 48, touch 42, flat-footed 38; Atk +55 melee (5d8+38/19-20, bite) and +49 melee (2d8+29, 2 claws); Face/Reach 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.; SA improved grab, spell-like abilities, swallow whole; SQ darkvision 60 ft., DR 20/+6, fast healing 20, immortality, immunity (poison), infusion, low-light vision, N'gharl seed, outsider traits, resistances (acid 20, cold 20, electricity 20, fire 20), scent, SR 50; AL NE; SV Fort +34, Ref +31, Will +28; Str 47, Dex 31, Con 36, Int 21, Wis 30, Cha 27.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +28, Climb +38, Concentration +33, Diplomacy +20, Hide +22, Intimidate +30, Jump +38, Knowledge (nature) +21, Knowledge (the planes) +25, Listen +41, Move Silently +30, Search +25, Spot +41; Cleave, Combat Casting, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite).

Improved Grab (Ex): If Azuvidexus hits a Large or smaller opponent with his bite attack, he deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity (grapple bonus +77). If he gets a hold, he can try to swallow the opponent in the next round. Alternatively, Azuvidexus has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use his jaws to hold the opponent (-20 penalty on grapple check, but Azuvidexus is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check he makes during successive rounds automatically deals bite damage.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day -- *darkness, poison, unholy aura*; 1/day -- *blasphemy, contagion, desecrate, horrid wilting, summon monster IX* (fiends only), *unhallow, unholy blight*. Caster level 33rd, Save DC 31 + spell level. 3/day -- *haste, greater dispelling, see invisibility*. Caster level 15th; save DC 31 + spell level.

Swallow Whole (Ex): Azuvidexus can swallow a Medium-size or smaller opponent by making a successful grapple check (grapple bonus +77), provided that the opponent is already in his mouth at the start of his turn. Once inside Azuvidexus, the opponent takes 2d8+38 points of bludgeoning damage per round plus 8 points of acid damage per round from Azuvidexus's gizzard. A successful grapple check allows the swallowed creature to climb out of the gizzard and return to Azuvidexus's mouth, where another successful grapple check is needed to get free. Alternatively, a swallowed creature can try to cut its way out with either claws or a light piercing or slashing weapon. Dealing at least 25 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 20) in this way creates an opening large enough to permit escape. Once a single swallowed creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; thus, another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. Azuvidexus's gizzard can hold 2 Medium-size, 4 Small, 8 Tiny, 16 Diminutive, or 32 Fine or smaller opponents.

Fast Healing (Ex): Azuvidexus regains lost hit points at the rate of 20 per round. Fast healing does not restore hit points lost from starvation, thirst, or suffocation, and it does not allow Azuvidexus to regrow or reattach lost body parts.

Immortality: If Azuvidexus is slain, petrified, imprisoned, or otherwise permanently disabled, the seed causes his physical body to vanish in a soundless wave of black necromantic fire. Each creature within 120 feet of him at this time must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 45) or gain 2d6 negative levels. A successful save indicates that only 2 negative levels are gained. The Fortitude save to remove these negative levels is DC 40. The Crawling Jungle remains, but quickly dies off over a month-long period of rotting, and its evil inhabitants flee for new lairs. Approximately one hundred years later, the seed, Azuvidexus, and the Crawling Jungle manifest again at a random point elsewhere in the world.

Infusion (Su): As a full-round action, Azuvidexus can infuse a humanoid creature he has swallowed with the fell energies of the seed. This process applies the fiendish template to the victim, unless it makes a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 45). Azuvidexus then vomits up the new acolyte of the Ravenous Maw. Those who deny this gift and do not immediately choose Azuvidexus as their new master are eaten for real.

N'gharl Seed (Su): The N'gharl seed is no longer an artifact in its own right because it has bonded completely with Azuvidexus. In addition to the terrible transformation the seed wrought upon the dinosaur, it provides the paragon with two new abilities: infusion and immortality.

Outsider Traits: Azuvidexus cannot be raised or resurrected (though a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore life).

Scent (Ex): Azuvidexus can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

(The paragon creature template comes from the *Epic Level Handbook*. Several elements of this NPC stat block use concepts from this book, such as damage reduction that requires weapons of higher than +5 bonus to penetrate and caster levels higher than level 20. If you aren't comfortable with introducing these elements to your campaign, you can easily reduce them to the top end of the core rules. Azuvidexus will still be a fairly tough customer!)

Introducing Azuvidexus to Your Campaign

- Azuvidexus is a formidable opponent -- one who should test the mettle even of a 20th-level party. Nevertheless, you can introduce him into a lower-level campaign in subtle ways. Perhaps the PCs hear rumors of a terrible dinosaur god worshiped by savage elves in a nearby wood, and they seek out these elves to determine the veracity of the claims. Or maybe they uncover a treasure map that leads to the "lair of Azuvidexus and his stolen kingdoms of gold." If you sprinkle the Ravenous Maw's name throughout the campaign, the PCs' final encounter with the beast should be all the more memorable.
- The most obvious way to introduce Azuvidexus into your game is to have the N'gharl Seed manifest the Crawling Jungle and its lord in the PCs' vicinity. The Crawling Jungle manifests with incredible and frightening speed, filling a 20-mile diameter region with steaming, monster-infested jungle in approximately 10 minutes of explosive growth. Structures and cities in this area are terribly damaged by this manifestation, but the jungle is careful to not harm a single living thing during this growth period. It saves life for its hungry inhabitants . . .
- It is unclear where the seed goes during this time, but if Azuvidexus is to be forever defeated, the seed itself must be destroyed during its century-long hibernation. A powerful party that defeats Azuvidexus in the Crawling Jungle may think it has prevailed over the seed, but to finish the job they must find where the seed has vanished to and repeat the process. Just how this might be done is up to you, but it should be a much more difficult task than slaying Azuvidexus the first time ever was.

Bringing the Parts Together

You should wait for the PCs to be fairly high level before you unleash the Crawling Jungle upon them; many of its inhabitants are quite dangerous and deadly. Also, having the jungle manifest in the PCs base of operations is an excellent way to force them to deal with the situation, although you should take care with such an option since this can radically alter the course of your campaign!

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